



by Doug Moench, Dan Day and Nestor Redondo!



hunting
for
Galileo

AZTEC AGE



The PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

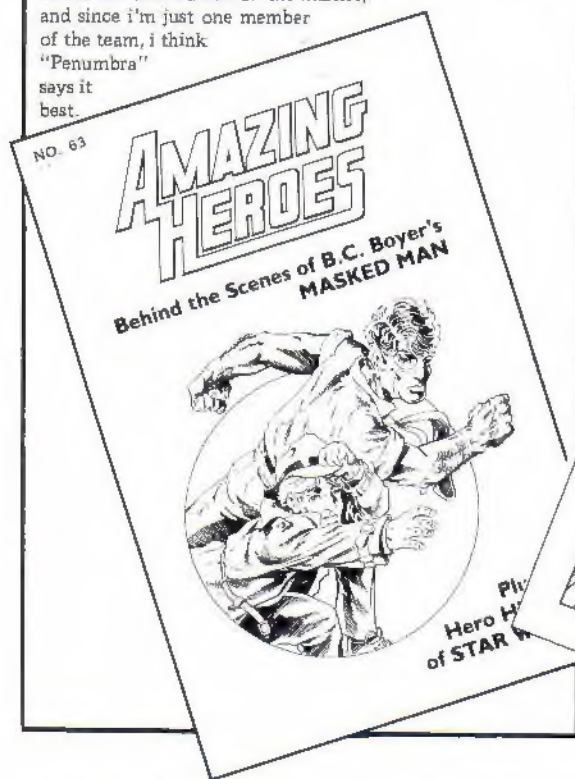
AND THE WINNER IS... As you can see by the title above this column, the monthly editorial page has been named ... and the winner of the Name-the-Column contest is Chris Cavell of 9111 Chilson Street, Pinckney, Michigan 48169. Chris will receive a free six-issue subscription to one of our comics.

And what does "Penumbra" mean? Glad you asked! The shadow cast by a planet or satellite (such as the moon) when the sun is behind it is called the "umbra." If you're inside the area of the umbra, you will witness a total eclipse. (Eclipse - get it?) Outside the umbra is a region of partial shadow, called the "penumbra" (from the Latin "paene" (almost) and "umbra" (shadow)).

About half the titles suggested were plays on my name, such as "Cat's Pause" (clever!) and "Cat Scan" (ditto). But although I am the editor-in-chief around these parts, I don't have quite the gall it takes to name a column after myself. That left the other half of the entries, most of which were based on the word "Eclipse." Some good ones were "Paperclipse" and "Line of the Ecliptic," but the one most often mentioned was "Total Eclipse," submitted by ten different people! Maybe I'm a little short in the ego department, but somehow "Total Eclipse," like the more poetic "Beyond the Umbra" suggested by runner-up Sivan S. Wall (who'll receive a ZOT! poster), seems to imply that the writer feels that what's being said on this page covers it all. Far from it. There are over sixty writers, artists, letterers, colourists, production people and editors working to make Eclipse books the best comics on the market, and since I'm just one member of the team, I think "Penumbra" says it best.

COVER STORY: Down below you'll see the covers to a pair of commentary magazines no Eclipse-lover will want to miss. **AMAZING HEROES** no. 63 cover-features B.C. Boyer's new bi-monthly comic, **THE MASKED MAN**, while **COMICS INTERVIEW** no. 18 does the same honour for Scott McCloud's **ZOT!** Both magazines contain great interviews with the creators of these popular comics, and I think they reveal a lot of behind-the-scenes information about what's upcoming in these titles too. Check 'em out.

THANKS WHERE THEY'RE DUE: The weekend after Thanksgiving I went to the Dallas winter convention, a truly rip-roaring affair attended by such luminaries as Harvey Kurtzman, Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, Mary Wolfman, Spain, Jerry Ordway, Jaxon, Pat Broderick and many, many more professionals. I want to extend my sincere thanks to fans Fred Burke and Barry Carroll, both of Austin, Texas, for helping me hold down the Eclipse table, where we gave away hundreds of free sample comic books, posters and flyers. Thanks next to the nice people who run the con, including Paul McSpadden and Larry Lankford, purveyors of genuine Texas hospitality. And thanks also to the woman with white hair and a cute daughter, who drove me from the airport to the con, and to Kevin Gould, who drove me back to the airport when the weekend was over. Oh yes, and for the post-con highlight, a ticket to see the incomparable Bruce Springsteen in concert, a final round of thanks must go to Fred Burke, with a nod too in the direction of the lawyer-comic book fan (Rob?) who drove us to the show. It rocked!



EYE TUNNELED TO INFINITY: 1609

WELCOME
TO VENICE,
GALILEO!

I HAVE IT
HERE--THE NEW
INVENTION OF
WHICH I WROTE!

IT IS
CALLED A
TELESCOPE,
GALILEO--

--AND THOUGH
CRUDE NOW, SOME-
DAY IT WILL BE A GREAT
BOON TO SEAFARING.
INDEED, THROUGH THIS
INSTRUMENT ONE'S EYE
MIGHT REACH TO THE
VERY HORIZON!

YES, MY
FRIEND, AND
PERHAPS...

...BEYOND.

MEOW!!!

PAOLIA: A GES- TATION LATER

I'M STILL HOUNDED, DAMN IT, BY FIERCE CHALLENGES TO GULLIBILITY! NOW IS IT THAT BRIDGET WAS ABLE TO SO QUICKLY AND EASILY JOIN THE STRANGE REALITY OF MY LIFE?

UND ZO, MY CARNABY STREET SIREN, ARE WE NOT SURPASSINGLY CHIC NOW?

HOW COULD SHE LEAVE HER PAST AND PRESENT BEHIND IN 1940-- IN EFFECT KILLING HERSELF FOR MY WEIRD FUTURE --WITHOUT EVEN SAYING GOOD-BYE TO ANY-ONE, AND SOLELY TO BE WITH ME?

HOW ABOUT RIGHT NOW, MY BONNIE LIES OVER DER LIEBCHEN?

UND IF I SUGGESTED SOME THINGS VE MIGHT DO TODAY, VWHAT VOULD DER DOLLY SAY DEN, HM?

IT MUST BE MORE THAN MY IRRESISTIBLE CHARM, EVEN IF I DO GET CHASED A LOT.

"ANY TIME AT ALL..."

"THINGS WE SAID TODAY..."

EVEN HUB-RIS CAN NOT RECONCILE IT.

SO, IS BRIDGET KRONOPOLDOUS MORE THAN SHE SEEMS TO BE?

"SHE LOVES YOU" (2)

AND NOW
THEY WON'T
LET ME GET
CLOSE TO
THAT CAT IN
THE TOWER
OF PADUA
UNIVERSITY--
ALMOST AS IF
THEY KNOW
TO WATCH
FOR ME.

PROVE
IT, CAVERN-
GROOVER...

HAS BRIDGET
BEEN BE-
TRAYING
ME? HAS SHE
SABOTAGED
MY--

YOWTCH!

BUT
HOW?
WHO
TOLD
THEM--?

"I
WANNA
HOLD YOUR
HAND..."

ACH,
MY LOVELY
METER MAID,
IF ONLY I
HAD A HAND
FOR YOU TO
HOLD...

"ALL
YOU NEED
IS LOVE..."

HOPE TO
HELL AND
BACK AGAIN
THAT MY
SUSPICIONS
ABOUT BRID
GET ARE
ALL WET...

UND
DOT IS
PRECISELY
WHAT I AM
SEEKING. VILL
YOU GIEF
TO ME?

...BECAUSE I
CAN'T AFFORD
MANY MORE
DISTRACTIONS
LIKE THAT...

"NO
REPLY..."

WELL OF RUBBERIZED SHOALS

"...AND ALSO BECAUSE ITS TOO LATE NOW..."



I'VE ALREADY MADE THE PLUNGE WITH HER.



SURELY DROWNED.

LIKE A CAT.

AND SINCE I NOW NEED HELP FOR MY NEXT ATTEMPT...

DAMN, BUT THAT PIKE WAS RUSTY.

--THERE'S LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO TRUST HER.

REGARDLESS OF MY SUSPICIONS OF HER...

--A COUPLE IS ALWAYS LESS SUSPICIOUS THAN A LONE MAN.

WE COULD MAKE BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TOGETHER, MY LITTLE GROUPIE.

"DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?"

WHAT SECRET? THAT VE COULD ALSO MAKE SOMETHING ELSE TOGETHER...?

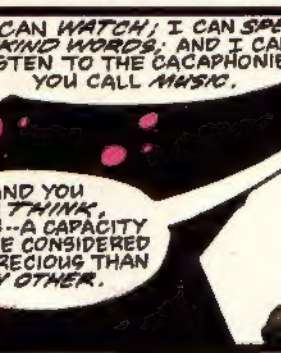
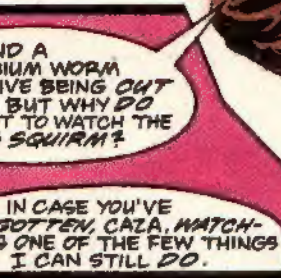
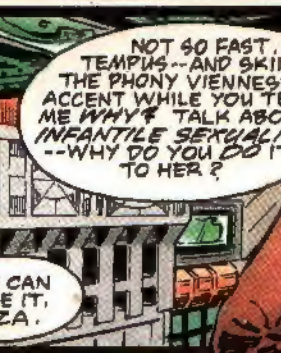
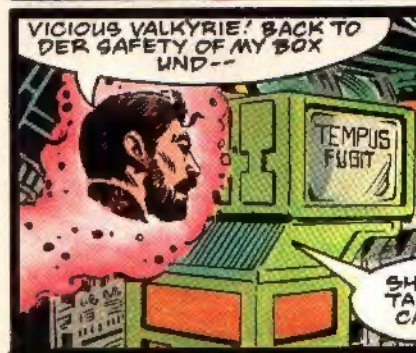
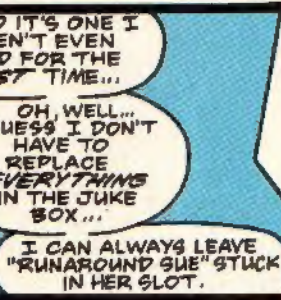
EH--IS TEMPUZ AT IT AGAIN?

NOPE--THAT I'VE HAD ENOUGH, HEAD!



ENOUGH!

NO FAIR--SENDING FOUR AGAINST ONE!



"I QUOTE: 'ANIMALS HAVE BODIES, BUT MAN LIVES IN THE BRAIN.' WHY ARE YOU NOW TREATING THE GIFT SO SHABBLLY? WHY DO YOU ABUSE RATHER THAN USE IT?"

YES... I CAN IMPROVE THE TELESCOPE'S POWER BY A FACTOR OF THIRTY-TWO.

PERHAPS I ABUSE THE GIFT BECAUSE THERE'S SO LITTLE LEFT OF THE MAN WHO RECEIVED IT.

PERHAPS BECAUSE I'M TRAPPED IN THE MIND-SET OF A DEAD STRANGER WHO--

--WHO FORMS THE INTELLECTUAL VESSEL OF YOUR OWN CHOICE, TEMPUS.

THEN PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS FORCED TO MAKE ANY CHOICE?

AND IS IT HER FAULT, TEMPUS?!

CAZA, PLEASE... I ASSUMED I WAS NOT A VERY SEXUAL MAN.

SEXUALITY IS NOT MEASURED BY A CASANOVA'S SCOREBOOK.

I THOUGHT DEALING WITH THIS WOULD BE EASY FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME. I WAS WRONGS.

FOR ALL MY VAUNTED THINKING, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT.

AND NOW, TO BE LOCKED IN THIS VIEWPOINT, THIS PERSONA --OF ALL PERSONAE!-- IT... IT'S NOT EASY.

I... I JUST CAN'T ACCEPT THE VERY BASIS OF MY NEW EXISTENCE...

...THE FACT THAT I... I'M NEVER TRULY MYSELF.

AND IN TOUCHING WHAT IS LEFT, MY HANDS TREMBLING, I EMBRACE ALL OF HIM.

HERETIC
FELINUS

THE
MICE--
THEY DEVOUR
MY
NOTES.

TOO
MUCH
COULD
BE
LOST--

A CAT,
MY LORD?

THE BEST
MOUSER YOU
CAN FIND,
TORRICELLI.

ALL YOU FEED IS LOVE

ABOUT TIME YOU GOT BACK, ACEY-
DEUCE, 'CAUSE I GOT A GUITAR
TO PICK WITH YOU...

"PEGGY SHE" MAY BE
FAB-GEAR, MISTER, BUT WHY
HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ME ABOUT
THE BEATLES, NOT TO MENTION
ALL THE OTHER
MERSEY-BEATERS?

BRIDGET, ONLY SO
MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE
YOU JOINED ME AND--

BUT THE
BEATLES,
ACE!

--AND THERE'S A
LOT SINCE 1940
WHICH YOU HAVEN'T
YET--

THE
BEATLES!

ALL RIGHT
...I GUESS IT'S
BECAUSE THERE'S
A CERTAIN AMOUNT
OF PAIN
INVOLVED...

PAIN-?

YOU
DON'T
WANT TO
KNOW.

--SIMPLY
BECAUSE
SCAVENGERS
FIND THE
TASTE OF
PARCHMENT
PLEASING.

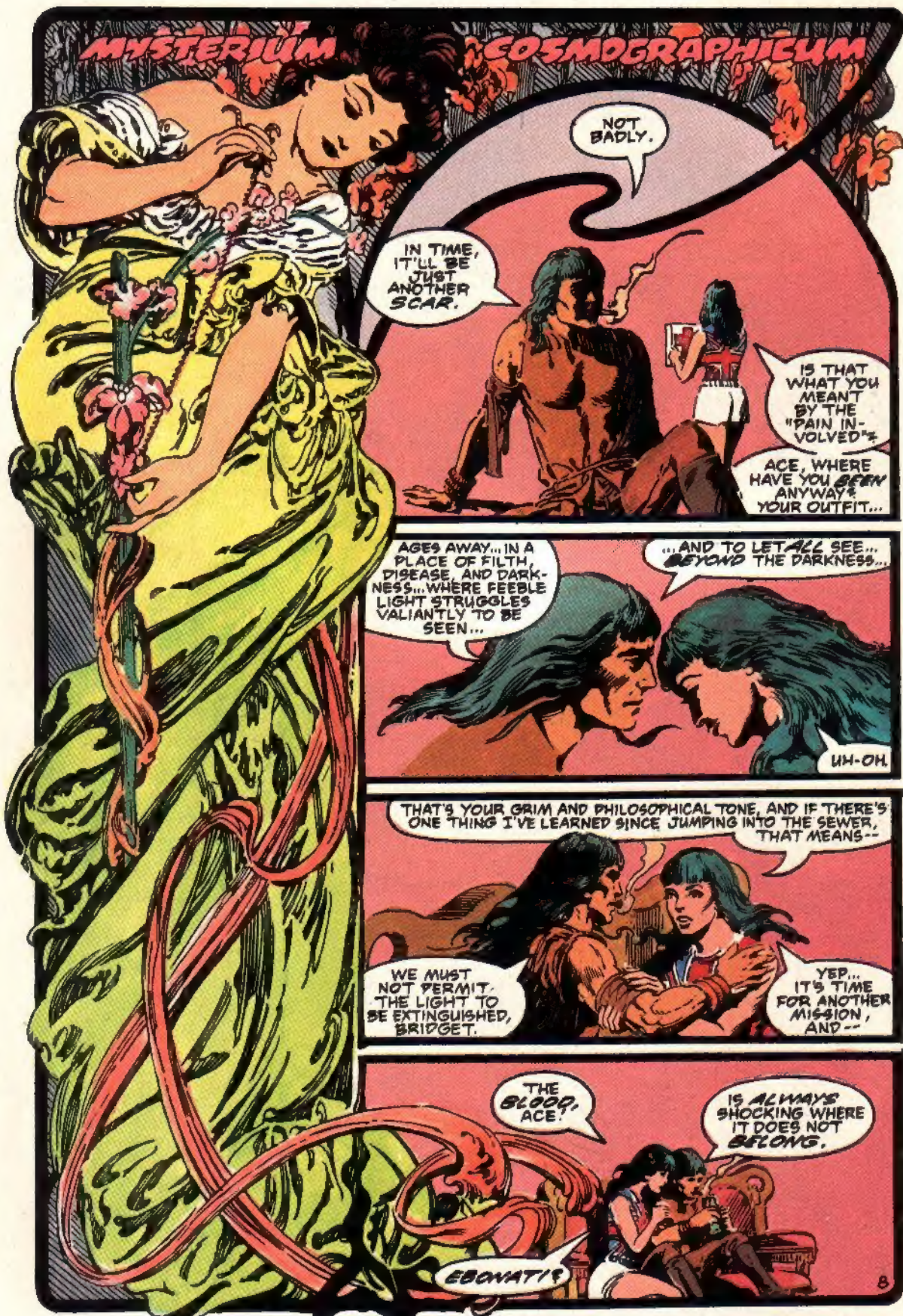
JUST STAY WITH THE
SIXTIES AND AWAY
FROM THE END OF
'60...

SPASP

...AND
EVERY-
THING
WILL
SOUND
FINE.

BUT
WHAT--

YOUR
ARM, ACE,
--YOU'RE
WOUNDED!



NOT
BADLY.

IN TIME,
IT'LL BE
JUST
ANOTHER
SCAR.

IS THAT
WHAT YOU
MEANT
BY THE
"PAIN IN-
VOLVED"?

ACE, WHERE
HAVE YOU BEEN
ANYWAY?
YOUR OUTFIT...

AGES AWAY... IN A
PLACE OF FILTH,
DISEASE, AND DARK-
NESS... WHERE FEEBLE
LIGHT STRUGGLES
VALIANTLY TO BE
SEEN...

...AND TO LET ALL SEE...
BEYOND THE DARKNESS...

UH-OH.

THAT'S YOUR GRIM AND PHILOSOPHICAL TONE, AND IF THERE'S
ONE THING I'VE LEARNED SINCE JUMPING INTO THE SEWER,
THAT MEANS--

WE MUST
NOT PERMIT.
THE LIGHT TO
BE EXTINGUISHED,
BRIDGET.

YEP...
IT'S TIME
FOR ANOTHER
MISSION,
AND--

THE
BLOOD,
ACE!

IS ALWAYS
SHOCKING WHERE
IT DOES NOT
BELONG.

EBONYTIE?

IF NOT, THEN THE PASSAGE OF MOLECULES THROUGH EONS IS MORE COMPLEX THAN I DREAMED OR CAN DEAL WITH.

MEANING?

THAT I WANT TO TRUST YOU, BUT CAN'T... NOT YET.

HISTORY HAS BEEN DEFILED IN A SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT WAY, AND IF NOT BY THE EBONATI...

SOMETIMES IT'S ALL TOO CONVOLUTED TO KEEP STRAIGHT.

WHEN ARE WE GOING?

NOW.

NO-- I MEAN, *TO* WHEN ARE WE GOING? WHAT'S OUR DESTINATION THIS TIME?

YES.

BUT THE TRUTH IS: IF SHE IS MORE THAN SHE SEEMS, I DO NOT WISH TO ENDANGER HE WHO WAS A FELLOW TRAVELER BUT WHO HAS CEASED TRAVELING.

YEAH... IF THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE WHO CAN TRAVEL THROUGH TIME--

EXACTLY. AND IF THERE ISN'T, AND WHAT I'VE JUST SEEN WASN'T CAUSED BY THE EBONATI EITHER--

PADUA, ITALY, 1609...

A CRUCIAL TIME FOR THE ASTRONOMER GALILEO, WHO WAS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH SPACE... BUT WHO PROVED THAT SPACE CAN BE USED TO MEASURE TIME...

AND TO GAUGE THE BIRTHDAY OF EVERYTHING--THE ORIGIN OF THE BIG-BANGED COSMOS ITSELF.

--THEN IT IS TRUE HISTORY--AND WHAT I REMEMBER AS TRUE HISTORY IS ACTUALLY FALSE, MEANING I REMEMBER IT THAT WAY BECAUSE I WAS DESTINED TO SOMEDAY ALTER IT TO THE FALSITY I PERCEIVE AS TRUE.

HUH? BUT THEN... WOULDN'T YOU BE CREATING PARADOX GLITCHES?

I DON'T KNOW ANY MORE.

IF YOU SAY SO, HONEY, BUT HOW'D YOU LEARN OF THIS MISSION?

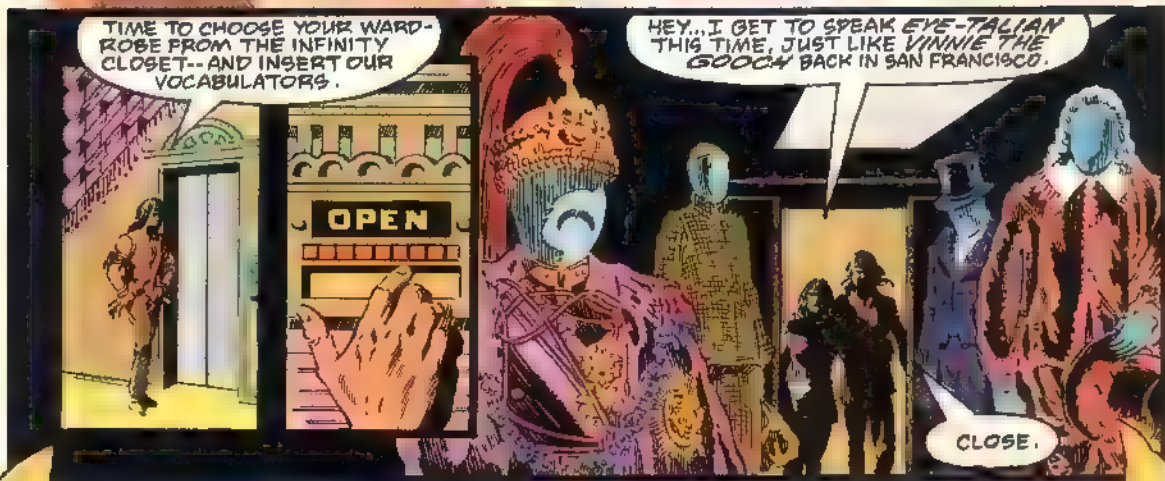
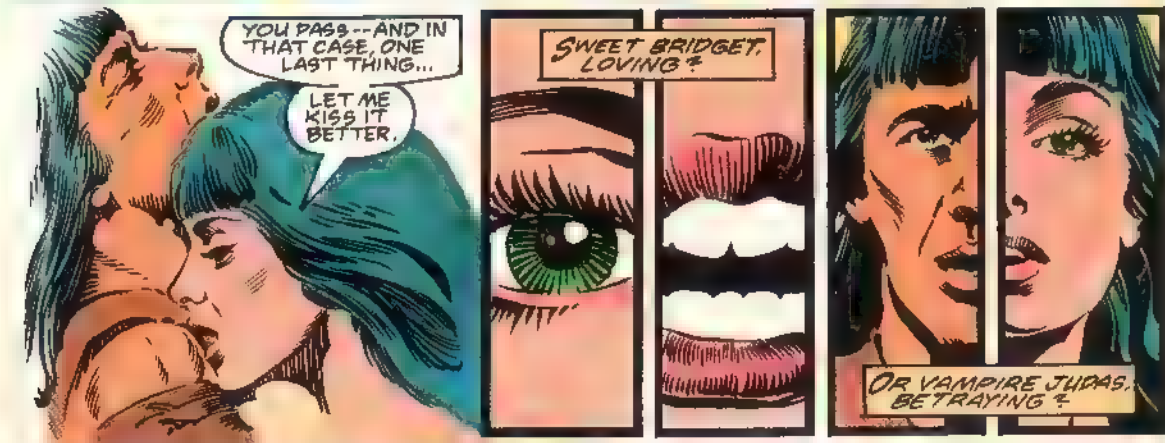
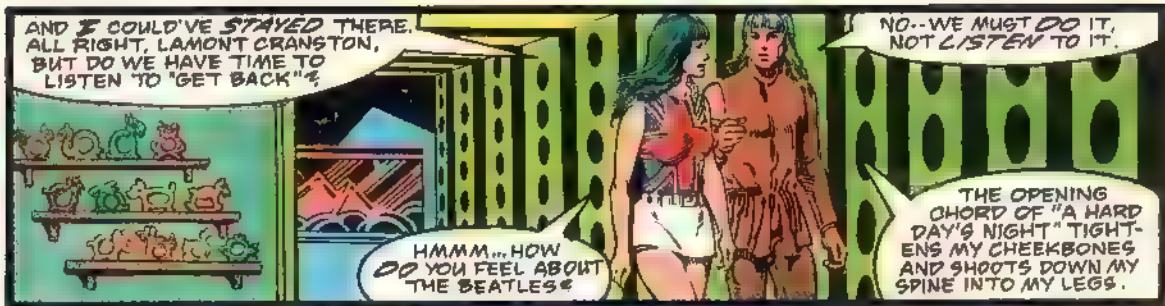
I... HAVE MY WAYS.

WHICH YOU REFUSE TO EXPLAIN--BECAUSE IT WOULD BLOW MY MIND?

ACE, THE ONE THING I DON'T LIKE ABOUT YOU--ALTHOUGH THE MYSTERY DOES ADD TO YOUR APPEAL--IS ALL THE SECRECY.

I FEEL SORTA SHUT OUT, Y'KNOW?

IN TIME BRIDGET, JUST REMEMBER... I COULD HAVE LEFT YOU IN 1940.



"GALILEO GALILEI WAS A PREMIERE PIONEER OF RATIOS AS WELL AS OF RATIONALITY. HE UNDERSTOOD WITH COOL CLARITY THAT INTERVALS COULD AND SHOULD MEASURE BOTH THE DISTANCE BETWEEN PLACES AND THE ELAPSEMENT BETWEEN MOMENTS, AND MOREOVER THAT THE TWO ARE INEXTRICABLY MARRIED IN THE FACE OF A PERSECUTION WHICH AMOUNTED TO HOLY HELL. HE WAS IN EVERY CRUCIAL SENSE THE TRUE DISCOVERER OF THE KEY TO TIME AND SPACE, AND HIS CLAIM TO SUCH--THOUGH HE DIED IN 1642 NEVER KNOWING IT--IS MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN MINE WILL EVER BE."

—CAZA, 1518

CAT YRONWODE
EDITOR

PHIL DE WALT
COLORIST

PETER IRO
LETTERER

mousing for galileo



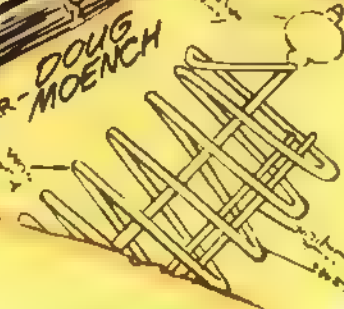
ARTIST
PENCILS

DAN
DAY

ARTIST
INKER

NESTOR
REDONDO

WRITER
DOUG
MOENCH



BOIT HOWDY

BOIT

WE WOMB-FACTOR
TO THE SAME WELL.
SMALL WONDER TEMPUS
CHOSE FREUD.

**SIDEREUS NUNCIAS:
THE STARRY MESSENGER**

I WAS RIGHT, WITH
BRIDGET FORMING A
COUPLE AT MY SIDE,
THE GUARDSMEN GIVE
US NOT A SECOND GLANCE...

WARM
HERE --
BUT WHAT
DO WE DO
NOW?

YOU
HAVEN'T
EVEN SAID
WHAT THE
THREAT TO
GALILEO
IS.

YOU MEAN OUR
WHOLE MISSION IS TO
CATCH NICE FOR
GALILEO?

IT'S A MINOR BUT PERSISTENT
THREAT TO HIS TELESCOPE
DESIGNS, NOT
TO HIM?

BUT FIRST...YOU'RE
TOO CLEAN FOR
THIS MILLIEU.

ACE...WHAT
IF WE CATCH
SOME DISEASE?

IF WE STAY HERE,
WE DIE. IF WE
MAKE IT BACK
TO THE A.C.E.,
WE LIVE.

WHEN ONE CAN JUMP
AHEAD TO ANY MEDICAL
BREAKTHROUGH, IT'S AS
SIMPLE AS THAT.

YEAH...
IT IS,
ISN'T IT?

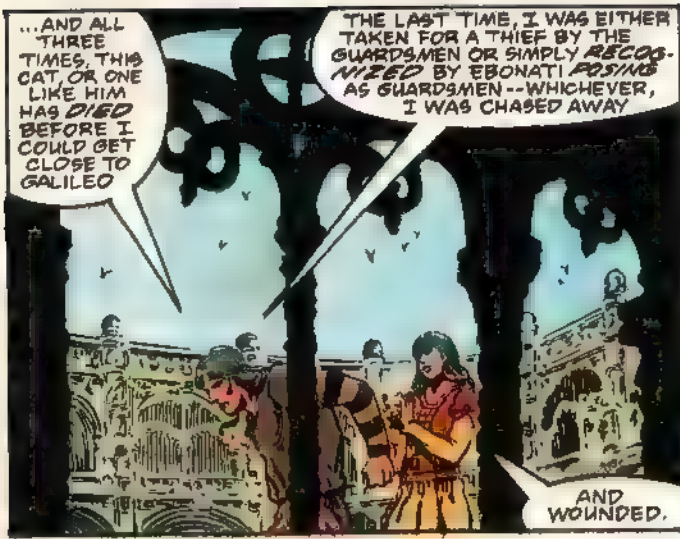
SHE WOULD NOT HAVE ASKED WERE SHE
NOT INNOCENT--OR POSSESSED OF
ENOUGH GUILE TO BREAK MY HEART
AND SPILL MY BLOOD.

NOW WE
FIND A CAT ON
THE WAY TO THAT
TOWER AT PADUA
UNIVERSITY.

I HOPE I
TRULY HAVE
SULLIED HER.
I HOPE I AM
WRONG.

AND
STILL THEY FEED,
NIBBLING AWAY
AT MY EFFORTS
NIGHTLY.

"I'VE MADE THREE SEPAR-
ATE ATTEMPTS TO
ENSURE THAT GALILEO'S
DISCOVERIES WILL IN FACT
BE DISCOVERED..."



...AND ALL THREE TIMES, THIS CAT, OR ONE LIKE HIM HAS DIED BEFORE I COULD GET CLOSE TO GALILEO

THE LAST TIME, I WAS EITHER TAKEN FOR A THIEF BY THE GUARDSMEN OR SIMPLY RECOGNIZED BY EBONATI POSING AS GUARDSMEN--WHICHEVER, I WAS CHASED AWAY

AND WOUNDED.



YES--ALTHOUGH IT'S NOW CLOSER TO A SCAR, ONE DAY BEFORE IT WAS INFLICTED.



HOOD...

SO WHAT CAN WE DO THIS FOURTH TIME?



INGRATiate OURSELVES--AND OPERATE FROM THE INSIDE.

DON'T WORRY KITTY --WE'RE TWO OF THE BEST BODYGUARDS IN THE BIZ.



MEEROW?

A MAN AND A WOMAN TO SEE YOU, MY LORD--BEARING A GIFT THEY CLAIM I DID NOT KNOW IF I SHOULD SEND THEM AWAY, OR--



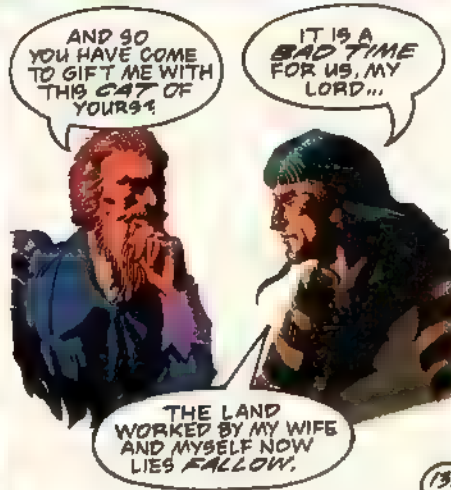
SHOW THEM IN TORRI-BELLI.



I HAVE HEARD, MY LORD, THAT YOU ARE IN NEED OF A Mouser.

AND HOW WOULD YOU HAVE HEARD THAT?

I...HAVE GOOD EARS, MY LORD.



AND SO YOU HAVE COME TO GIFT ME WITH THIS CAT OF YOURS?

IT IS A BAD TIME FOR US, MY LORD...

THE LAND WORKED BY MY WIFE AND MYSELF NOW LIES FALLOW.



AND YOU ARE NAMED?



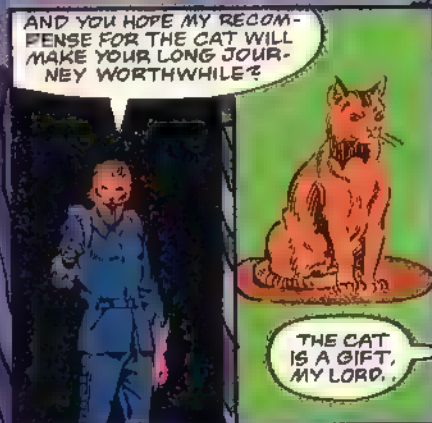
CAZA.



A STRANGE NAME.



I COME FROM...AFAR.



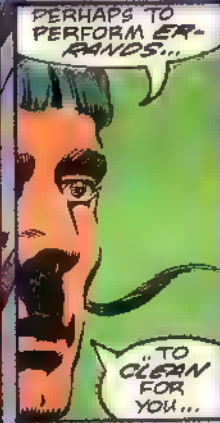
AND YOU HOPE MY RECOM-PENSE FOR THE CAT WILL MAKE YOUR LONG JOUR-NEY WORTHWHILE?



THE CAT IS A GIFT, MY LORD.



BUT WE DID HOPE YOU MIGHT ~~TAKE~~ US.



PERHAPS TO PERFORM ER-RANDS...

TO CLEAN FOR YOU...



FOR ME, WHY ME?

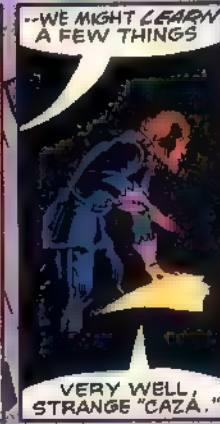


GALILEO GALILEI IS ALREADY RE-NOUNDED THROUGH-OUT ITALY



YOU ARE A MAS-TER MATHEMA-TICIAN.

PERHAPS, WHILE WORKING FOR YOU--



--WE MIGHT LEARN A FEW THINGS

VERY WELL, STRANGE "CAZA."



MY POSITION HERE AFFORDS ME AN ALLOW-ANCE.



YOU MAY STAY UNTIL IT RUNS OUT, BUT I WARN YOU...



IT IS A SMALL ALLOWANCE, AND WILL RUN OUT SOON.



THEN WE CAN ON-ly HOPE, MY LORD--

THAT IT WILL LAST LONG ENOUGH.



RAFTING

WE SPEND THE FIRST NIGHT ON HIGH...

JUST WHAT I LIKE AT THE END OF A LONG DAY, ACEY-DEUCE --SLIVERS IN MY CHEEKS.

AT THE END OF IT ALL, BRIDGET. I PROMISE YOU A BATH.

...AND THE SECOND NIGHT, TOO, IS PASSED UP IN THE RAFTERS.

DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY STONE STAIRS I SCRUBBED TODAY-- AND NOW WE CAN'T EVEN SLEEP?

THE THIRD NIGHT, WHILE ONE FEAST PREVENTS ANOTHER...

... WE WATCH THE WEAVING OF INTRICATE WONDER, WAITING FOR SOMEONE OR SOMETHING TO ENTER OUR TRAP WHILE Hoping IT WON'T.

PARCHMENTS OF THE DAMNED

THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS HAVE PASSED SLEEPLESSLY AND MY WOUND THROBS; HIS PAIN-- STAKING WORK CONTINUES, AND THE CAT STILL LIVES WHILE MICE DIE.

YOUR WORK IS NEARLY DONE, MY LORD?

HIS WORK IS ALMOST DONE.

AND GABILEO'S?

HIS TOO.

PATIENCE, BRIDGET-- ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO AN END.

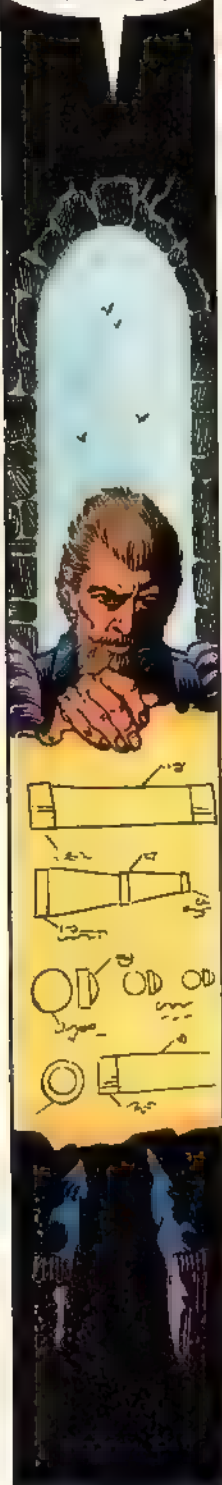
THAT IT IS, STRANGE CAZA...

HER HEAD FEELS TOO GOOD ON MY SHOULDER; I MUST BE WRONG

SQUEEE

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED A NEW WORLD HERE ON EARTH.

WITH THE INSTRUMENT DEVELOPED FROM THESE DESIGNS, I HOPE TO MULTIPLY HIS FEAT-- BY HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS, MILLIONS...



...OUT THERE-- BEYOND THE SHACKLES OF THIS EARTH.



AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT, STRANGE CAZA?

DO YOU THINK GALILEO GALILEI MAD?

I THINK, MY LORD, THAT A DISPUTE BREWS OVER THE TWO WORLD VIEWS-- THAT OF PTOLEMY AND THAT OF COPERNICUS.



YOU ARE MORE LEARNER THAN YOU APPEAR, STRANGE CAZA, BUT KNOW THIS: COPERNICUS WAS RIGHT!

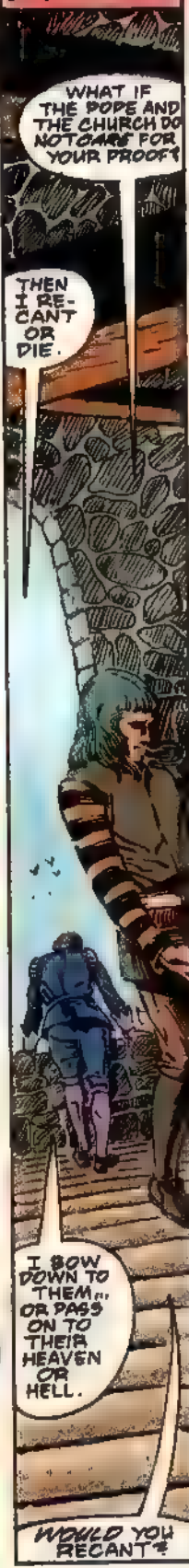


AND WITH MY TELESCOPE, ITS POWER MAGNIFIED BY A FACTOR OF THIRTY-TWO, I WILL PROVE IT.



IF BRIDGET AND I SUCCEED, HE IS RIGHT-- AND 32 IS 23 TRANSPOSED.

GAB FEAR



WHAT IF THE POPE AND THE CHURCH DO NOT CARE FOR YOUR PROOF?

THEN I RE-CANT OR DIE.

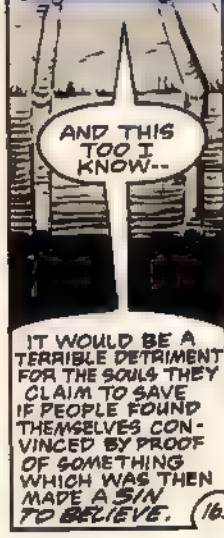
I BOW DOWN TO THEM, OR PASS ON TO THEIR HEAVEN OR HELL.

WOULD YOU RE-CANT?

I KNOW NOT.



UNTIL HE WAS EXCISED THE INQUISITION, NO MAN CAN KNOW. I KNOW ONLY THAT THE BOOK OF NATURE IS WRITTEN IN MATHEMATICAL CHARACTERS.



AND THIS TOO I KNOW--

IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE DETRIMENT FOR THE SOULS THEY CLAIM TO SAVE IF PEOPLE FOUND THEMSELVES CONVINCED BY PROOF OF SOMETHING WHICH WAS THEN MADE A SIN TO BELIEVE.

GOOD NIGHT,
STRANGE CAZA--
TOMORROW MY WORK
ENDS ...

..AND A
GUEST AMONG
THE STARS
BEGINS.

HE MUST BE
GIVEN HIS
CHANCE...



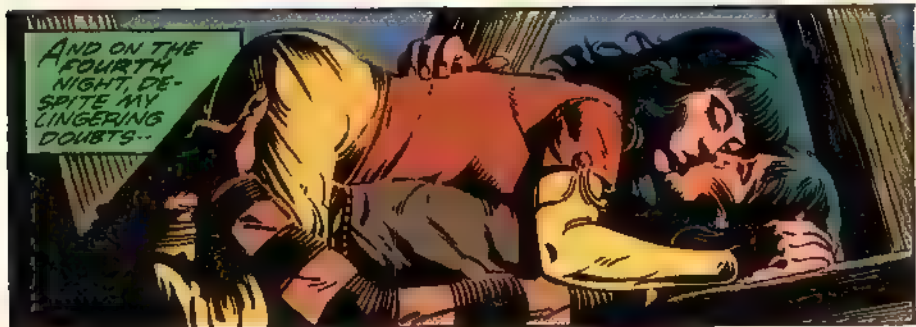
...TO FIND HELL...
WAITING IN THE
HEAVENS.

KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
MEOW?

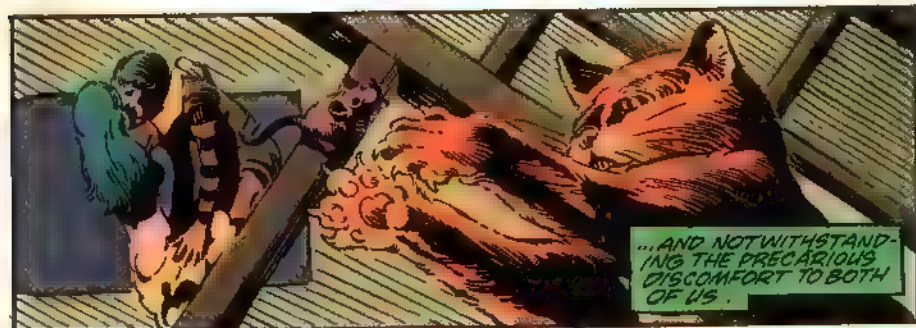


THE CAT HAS NEVER
HEARD THE SOUND
OF A CAMERA.

THANKS FOR THE
LENS, GALI.



AND ON THE
FOURTH
NIGHT, DE-
SPITE MY
LINGERING
DOUBTS...



...AND NOTWITHSTAND-
ING THE PRECARIOUS
DISCOMFORT TO BOTH
OF US.



...WE CAN
NO LONGER
RESIST...

SQUEEE



AND IN THE
WARMTH OF
FLESH ENFOLDING
FLESH THE
QUICKNESS WITH
WHICH THE FOURTH
NIGHT PASSES...
LASTS FOREVER...

...MAKING IT
A GOOD NIGHT,
INDEED.

AS WILL GALILEO'S TELESCOPE--DISCOVERING SUNSPOTS, THE LIBRATIONS OF THE MOON, THE SATELLITES OF JUPITER, AND THE FACT THAT THE MILKY WAY IS COMPRISED OF STARS..

HELL OF A WAY TO KEEP ME AWAKE, ACEY-DEUCE.

BUT IT WORKED

AM

AA--YOU'RE IN TIME TO HELP ME CELEBRATE, STRANGE CAZA. MY DESIGNS ARE COMPLETED--CALCULATION OF LENS CURVATURE--EVERYTHING IS DONE!

TOMORROW I WILL HAVE THE INSTRUMENT ASSEMBLED AND--

LORD CHRIST, NO!!

TOO QUICKLY FOR GALILEO TO NOTICE, MY SCRAM- BACK'S ENERGY HOLDS BACK THE SPILL UNTIL I CAN REACH THE PARCHMENT...

YOU... YOU HAVE FAST HANDS, STRANGE CAZA... FRIEND CAZA.

TO PRESERVE THE QUICKNESS OF YOUR MIND, MY LORD...

...THE VIRGINITY OF YOUR DESIGNS.

THE BOOKS MAY FALL, BUT THE WINE MUST NOT.

...FOR THE WINE IS LIKE BLOOD.

ONE NIGHT TO GO, CAT.

THE BLOOD BLOT

AT FIRST THE FIFTH NIGHT PASSES AS QUIETLY AS THE OTHERS.

PERHAPS WE DOZE, OR MERELY SHARE A TRANCE...

...UNTIL IRONY APPOINTS THE CAT TO ALERT US.

PSST

THERE BRIDGET-- THAT SHADOW --TOO THIN TO BE GALILEO OR TORRICELLI!

THEN IT'S OUR MOUSE-- FINALLY!

WE POUNCE.

...AND FLEES DOWN SPIRALING STAIRS SCRUBBED BY BRIDGET'S RED-DENED HANDS

IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THE PARCHMENT DESIGNS ARE LEFT ALONE, BEHIND US...

WITH A THIRD EYE, SHORT OF THE WORK-TABLE, THE STEALTHY SHADOW WHIRLS...



BUT SURELY
THE THREAT
RECEDES
AHEAD OF
US, DOWN
THE TOWER
STAIRS.

AND TOO
WITH
LUCK...

SPAT
TAT
TAT

--THE CAT HAS
NOT FLED
FAR...



WHERE,
ACE--?

OUT
THE REAR
DOOR--INTO
THE GAR-
DEN!



BUT SOME-
WHERE DEEP
IN DARK
FOLDS LIKE
ITSELF--

--THE SHADOW
IS GONE.



THERE IS ONLY
THE NIGHT,
AND THE STARS
COMPRISING
HEAVEN'S
MYSTERY...

...SOON TO BE
CHARTED BY
GALILEO'S
MAGICAL, FAR-
REACHING
EYE.

THERE IS NOTHING
WE MAY DO BUT
RETURN TO THE
HIGH TOWER, TO
THE DESIGNS...



OH MY GOD,
ACE--! IT...IT'S
AWFUL!

HER HANDS
ARE CLEAN...
BUT IF SHE
KNEW IT WAS
TO BE DONE
IN THIS WAY,
WAS IT THE
SHADOW OR
SHE WHO LED
THE MERRY
CHASE DOWN
THOSE SCRUBBED
STAIRS?

WHO COULD
DO SUCH A
HIDEOUS
THING?

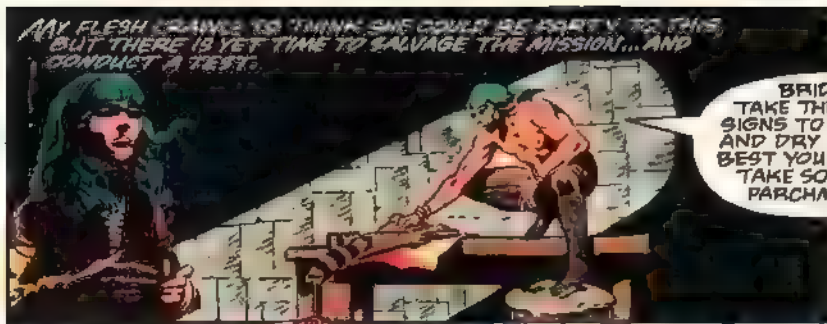
EBONATI, I
STILL PRAY... (20)

RODENT'S REVENGE

AS MUCH AS THE
SOURCE OF IT ALL,
THE LANTERN SWINGS
- EACH OSCILLATION
REVEALING MORE
BLOOD, A PENDULUM
TICKING OFF DEGREES
OF DEATH

THE CAT
HAS NOT
FLED FAR...

...AND THERE
IS INDEED A
DEEP, STILL
HORROR IN
BLOOD WHERE
IT DOES NOT
BELONG.



ANY FLESH WOULD THINK SHE COULD BE PART V TO THIS BUT THERE IS YET TIME TO SALVAGE THE MISSION...AND CONDUCT A TEST.

BRIDGET, TAKE THESE DESIGNS TO THE A.C.E. AND DRY THEM AS BEST YOU CAN--AND TAKE SOME BLANK PARCHMENT, TOO.



VEEB

--AND USE IT TO MAKE PRECISE TRACINGS OF THE DESIGNS

TELL HEAD TO SHOW YOU THE "ARTO-GRAPH LIGHT-BOX"

UNDER-STAND? I'VE GOT TO STAY HERE AND CLEAN UP...

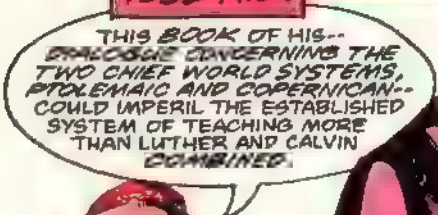


...BEFORE FINDING ANOTHER CAT AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THIS POOR WRETCH.

A-ALL RIGHT, ACE.. I'LL TRY

PLEASE DO--AND IF YOU PASS THE TEST, I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE THE TEACHER.

THE VATICAN, 23 YEARS LATER: 1632 A.D.



THIS BOOK OF HIS-- DIALOGUE CONCERNING THE TWO CHIEF WORLD SYSTEMS, PTOLEMAIC AND COPERNICAN-- COULD IMPERIL THE ESTABLISHED SYSTEM OF TEACHING MORE THAN LUTHER AND CALVIN COMBINED.

THEN HE MUST BE PROSECUTED.



BUT SINCE IT HAS BEEN PUBLISHED WITH THE FULL IMPRIMATUR OF A LICENSE, THERE IS NO WAY...UNLESS, SOMEHOW IN RETROSPECT, IT CAN BE ESTABLISHED THAT HE WROTE THE BOOK IN DEFIANCE OF A DIRECT ORDER ...

HMMM...



FORGERY BEFORE THE FACT



IRONIC-- GALILEO WAS CONVICTED OF HERESY ON THE "EVIDENCE" OF A FORGED DOCUMENT...



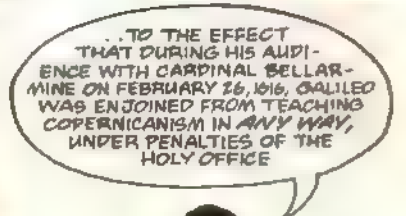
...AND HERE YOU ARE, FORGING HIS DESIGNS FOR THE TELESCOPE--

--WHICH HE WILL USE TO PRODUCE THE "HERESY" FOR WHICH HE WAS LATER CONVICTED.



GOD'S HAND REACHING BACK

A DOCUMENT HAS BEEN "DISCOVERED" IN THE FILE, YOUR HOLINESS...



...TO THE EFFECT THAT DURING HIS AUDIENCE WITH CARDINAL BELLARMI-NE ON FEBRUARY 26, 1616, GALILEO WAS ENJOINED FROM TEACHING COPERNICANISM IN ANY WAY, UNDER PENALTIES OF THE HOLY OFFICE

A MOST TIMELY DISCOVERY, BROTHER JESUIT

TEST RESULTS

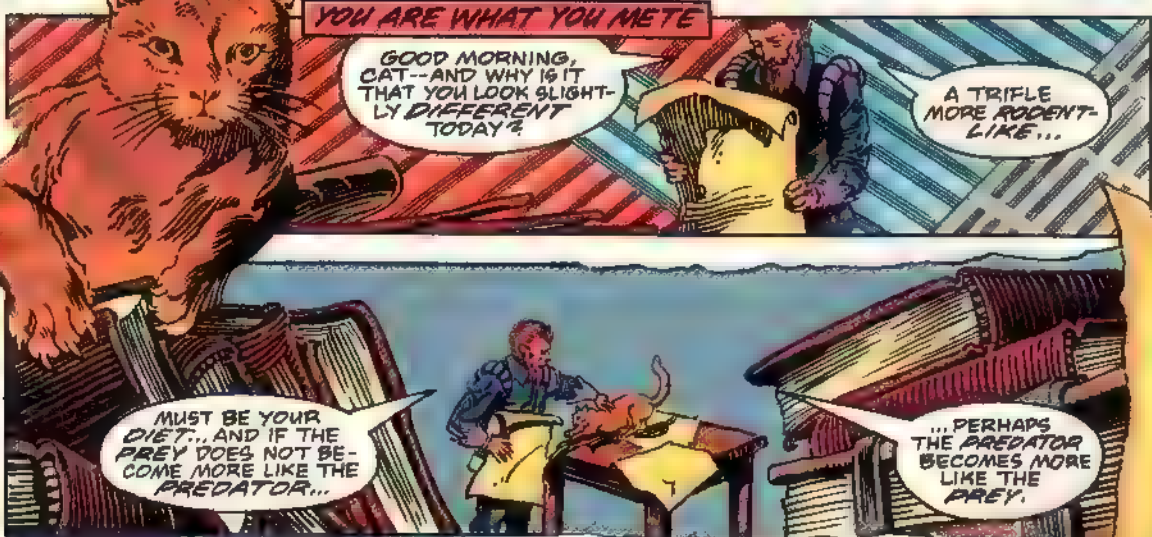
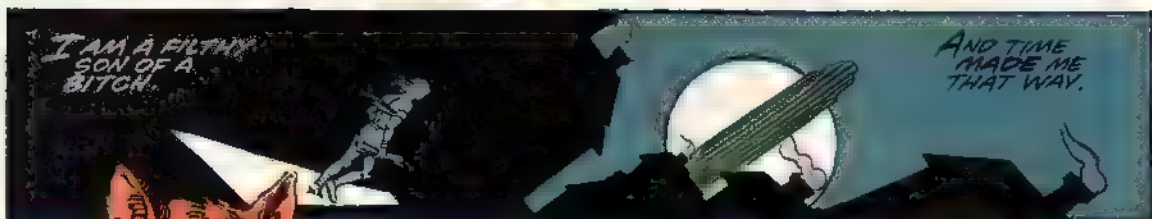
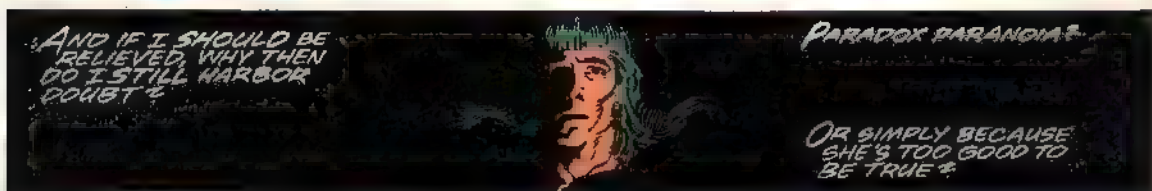
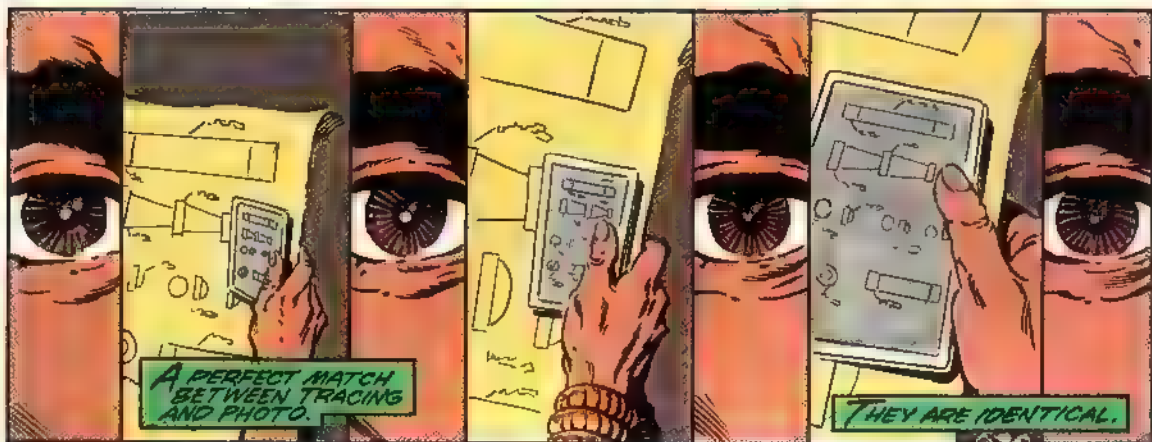
HERE ARE THE TRACINGS, ACE

LET THE INQUISITION BEGIN.



GOOD-- NOW GO BACK DOWN AND WAIT IN THE A.C.E

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST



PROMISES KEPT

"AND WHERE, I WONDER, IS MY EQUALLY STRANGE-LOOKING FRIEND, CAZA?"

I'D SCRUBBED THE TABLE AND FLOOR WITH MY TUNIC, HOPING HE'D TAKE THE BLOOD AS WINE--AND NOW, AS THE BATH HEALS MY WOUND, SHE REMINDS ME IN CERTAIN WAYS OF SHAKREEN...

ODD MISSION AGE... MOSTLY SEDATE, BUT THE BLOOD...

WAS PERHAPS SYMBOLIC OF WHAT'S AT STAKE.

AND THE CAT--HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS THE CRUCIAL FACTOR?

PUER ARTEMIS TOLD ME, IN HIS SHOP ON 23RD STREET, WHERE HIS FELLOW TRAVELLING CEASED.

I'D SEEN IT DEAD THREE TIMES.

HMP.

GONNA DRY MY HAIR. I SUPPOSE YOU'LL BE IN YOUR CHROMOMECH CHAMBER?

YES, WHY?

BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE YOU ALWAYS GO AFTER A MISSION.

THE LONGEST
DAY OF
ANY YEAR

SOLSTICE IN
ROME, JUNE 21,
1633 A.D.

HAVING BEEN
PROSECUTED FOR VEHE-
MENT SUSPICION OF HERE-
SY, YOU HAVE BEEN AD-
JUDGED GUILTY OF HAVING
HELD AND TAUGHT THE BLASPHE-
MOUS COPERNICAN DOCTRINE
AND YOU ARE HEREBY OR-
DERED TO RECANT.

I...I ABJURE
C-CURSE, AND DETEST
MY...PAST...
ERRORS.



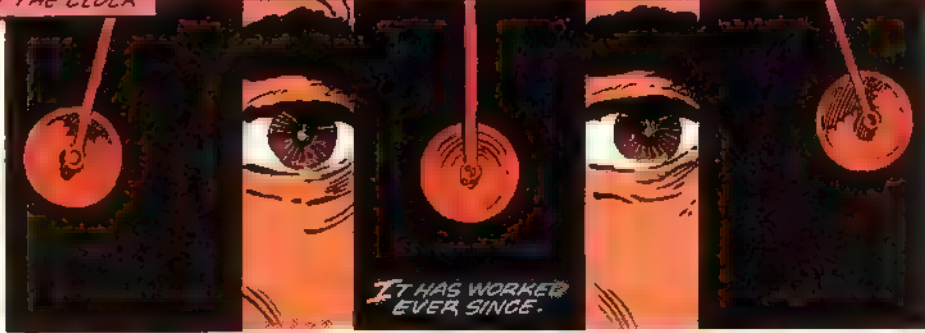
EXCELLENT, GALILEO
GALILEI. I COMMUTE THE
SENTENCE OF IMPRISONMENT
TO HOUSE ARREST AND
SECLUSION AT YOUR
ESTATE AT
ARCETRI.



GOD'S
WILL BE
DONE.

LIKE A PENDULUM DUE

IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1656 THAT THE DUTCH SCIENTIST CHRISTIAAN(H) HUYGENS PUT INTO PRACTICE GALILEO'S CONTENTION THAT A PENDULUM COULD REGULATE THE MECHANISM OF THE CLOCK

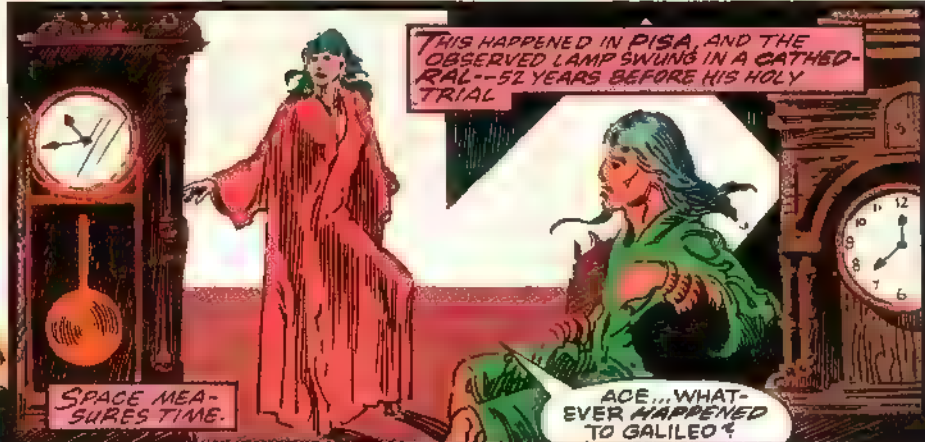


IT HAS WORKED
EVER SINCE.

ALMOST TOO
PREDICTABLY,
GALILEO'S IN-
SPIRATION WAS
LIGHT.



IN 1581, HE OBSERVED
THAT A SWINGING LAMP
ALWAYS REQUIRED THE
SAME AMOUNT OF TIME
TO COMPLETE AN OSCILLA-
TION, REGARDLESS OF
THE RANGE OF ITS SWING



THIS HAPPENED IN PISA, AND THE
OBSERVED LAMP SWUNG IN A CATHED-
RAL--52 YEARS BEFORE HIS HOLY
TRIAL

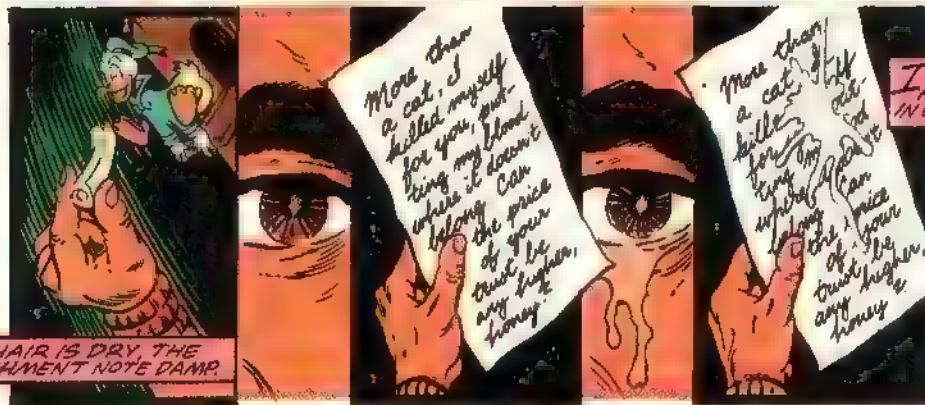
SPACE MEA-
SURES TIME.

AGE...WHAT-
EVER HAPPENED
TO GALILEO?

AFTER EIGHT
YEARS OF HOUSE
ARREST, HE
DIED OF SLOW
FEVER



KOO-KOO
KOO-KOO
KOO-KOO



HER HAIR IS DRY, THE
PARCHMENT NOTE DAMP.

More than
a cat, I
killed myself
for you, not-
hing my blood
where it doesn't
belong. Can
the price
of your
trust be
any higher,
honey?

More than
a cat, I
killed myself
for you, not-
hing my blood
where it doesn't
belong. Can
the price
of your
trust be
any higher,
honey?

I WEED
FREELY
IN GUILT...

...HOPING WITH EVERY
HOPE THE SHAME IS
DESERVED

HEY, HEY,
HEY--I DIDN'T
MEAN FOR IT TO
MAKE YOU CRY,
ACEY-DEUCE.

COME ON,
HONEY, IT'S BEEN
A HARD DAY'S
NIGHT FOR
REAL...

...SO LET'S GO DRIFT
IN THE MILD AND TIGHTEN
OUR CHEEKS WITH AN
OPENING CHORD...

...AND YOU CAN
TELL ME WHAT OTHER
WONDERFUL THINGS I
DON'T KNOW ABOUT...

"WHAT GREAT THINGS
DID GALILEO
GALILEI GRASP;
WHAT GREATER
THING AM I CROPPING
AFTER; AND WHY
MUST I PERSIST
IN PUTTING
BRIDGET THROUGH
MY OWN SECRET
INQUISITION TUNE
IN TOMORROW."
--CAZA;
NOWHEN

NEXT ISSUE:
ACE, BRIDGET, KROK,
AND SHAKREEN PLUNGE
INTO A WHIRLPOOL
OF ROUSING SUPER-
CHARGED PULP
ADVENTURE, IN--

**LORD
OF THE
SMOKING
MIRROR**

(THEN AGAIN, NEXT ISSUE JUST MIGHT
BE THE MOODILY MYSTERIOUS PICNICS
AT MIDNIGHT-- GUEST-STARRING
AMELIA EARHART, AMBROSE BIERCE, AND
GLENN MILLER! IT ALL DEPENDS ON TIME...)



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ELEMENTARY IONS & EONS, MY DEAR WALLACE

Bravo! Doug, I think you just may top your work on *Master of Kung Fu* with *AZTEC ACE*. The art is always a wonderful surprise, especially in light of the complex plots.

By an odd coincidence, I've just read Gary Jennings' *Aztec*, so *ACE* seems like a return visit to the Heart of the One World—with the addition of subplots from other eras. I'm eager to see how all your paradoxes turn out; time travel seems nearly impossible to convey in graphic narrative form, but I'm fascinated by how well you're pulling it off.

This brings me to my main point. One thing that draws me to *AZTEC ACE* is the similarity between *Ace* and one of my favorite science fiction characters: Ian Wallace's "Croyd." Are you familiar with this series of books, Doug? (*Croyd, Dr. Orpheus, Voyage to Dari, Z-Sting, Hellar's Leap*.) I feel sure you must be, although I've found very few people who are aware of this fantastic character. Croyd maneuvers through the future (downtime) and the past (uptime) in a manner similar to *Ace's*—but where *Ace* uses the *Azure Crosstime Express* to sail the *Golden Meld*, Croyd's time traveling is accomplished by mental means. Similar paradoxes, however, abound in both series.

Anyway, as the Firesign Theater's Bozos on this bus would say: "Forward, into the past!"

William R. Abbott
5649 Buffalo Gap Road
Abilene, TX 79605

Gary Jennings' brilliant *Aztec* is one of the nine sources I'm using for the *Mexica* material found in *AZTEC ACE*, William—and it's easily the best of the nine.

Scanning my shelves (in vain, of course), I find five books by Ian Watson (one entitled *The Very Slow Time Machine*, interestingly enough) but none by Ian Wallace. Perhaps when I finally get around to reading those five I'll discover they are my timeline's version of your timeline's Croyd books. But just on the offchance, I'll also keep my eyes peeled for the Wallace books and ... what's this?! Ian Watson also wrote something called *The Martian Inca*?! Hmm ... Incas ain't quite Aztecs, but still ...!

(And by the way, does Don Thompson know about this "Croyd" character ...?)

SPEAKING OF THOMP'S SON ...

Whoa! Now wait just a gall-durned second here, folks! I must take exception to what Doug Moench wrote in "Stinging Back" (Vreebs, *AZTEC ACE* #6).

I don't think calling the *Comics Buyer's Guide's* coeditor Don Thompson "a cranky poop" is going to solve anything, whether Don's opinion of *AZTEC ACE* is correct or not. He wasn't the first and he certainly won't be the last to compare your publication with the British television series *Doctor*

Who. This is because, regardless of what Dave Gibbons says, (most) anyone can see a resemblance between these two pieces of science fiction.

Now, I'm not accusing Doug of plagiarism, nor do I believe he's a liar for saying he never saw an episode of *Doctor Who* before scripting *AZTEC ACE* #3. What I am trying to say is this: People are entitled to their own opinions, and editors are entitled to publish these opinions. If you are that sensitive to criticism, you are probably in the wrong business.

Few people (even Don Thompson, though he might not admit it) can deny that *AZTEC ACE* is a pretty good publication ... it's just that some of us have found your magazine slightly similar to *Doctor Who*. Is that so terrible? I mean, it's not like we're saying they're one and the same or anything, so try to relax before your obvious paranoia and tension creep into your otherwise fine work (which is just my roundabout way of saying I really do like *AZTEC ACE* ... believe it or not!).

Conrad P. Felber
1319 Rose Marie Ave.
Sudbury, Ontario P3A 4E4

Conrad, it is hardly "terrible" that two time travel series share certain surface similarities. (Indeed, I'd expect *Doctor Who* to be compared to HG Wells' *The Time Machine* before *AZTEC ACE* is compared to *Doctor Who*—chronologically speaking.) However, I am offended by anyone assuming and/or implying that *AZTEC ACE* "owes" something to *Doctor Who*—especially when *Who* (good as he may be—and if he's Harlan Ellison's "hero," he must be good) was the farthest thing from my mind during the conception of *ACE*.

Or let me put it this way: If I had both the time and the inclination to watch any episodic TV, *Doctor Who* would probably be something I'd try and very possibly enjoy. But since I'd rather read, write, go for a run, play pinball, or watch laserdiscs of movies and music videos/concerts (not to mention spend time with wife and child)—and since I simply can't get it together to remember what night and what time *Doctor Who* (or any other primetime show) comes on—such is not likely. But please, *Who* fans, take no offense; avoiding "regular" TV is merely one of my eccentricities, not a putdown of your favorite show. (Wouldja believe I own the first two *Star Trek* theatrical movies on laserdisc (and have watched both twice) while I've never seen a single episode of the TV series from beginning to end? Weird I may be, but I swear it's true. I'd rather watch *Gunga Din* for the 7th time, *Casablanca* for the 12th time, Coppola's *The Conversation* for the 4th time, or Polanski's *The Tenant* for the 6th time than watch any TV show for the first time—and thanks to "home video," I can. I guess I OD-ed on TV in the ten years between 1954 and 1964 ... and

then came the Beatles and suddenly no time or desire for TV ... and now that I'm "settled" and have some time, I'd rather watch movies or music if I'm not reading. Sorry, Doctor ...)

And thank you, Conrad, for assuming I'm not a liar ...

GATS & GAMS

Let's hear it for ACE! Best book (not merely comic) I've read (yes, read, not just looked at the pictures) in what seems like years.

As a comics retailer I peruse everything, but very few titles really catch my eye. When AZTEC ACE first came in I didn't get a real chance to read it until #4, and it was actually better reading the first four consecutively. Whoa Nellie, was I overwhelmed—and the best news I've heard is that #5 is shipping a whole month early.

I love all the slang and period lingo. When I was in junior high school I discovered the Shadow and became the only kid in school who knew what a "gat" was.

Great art, too! Reading comics as a discriminating adult adds new luster to an old hobby, especially with books like AZTEC ACE, American Flagg, Six From Sirius, Blue Devil, E-Man and a few others now available.

Keep up the great work, Doug, and where do I get a ticket for the Azure Crosstime Express?

Rodger Shomo
The Book Bin
22030 Ford Rd.
Dearborn Hgts., MI 48127

Try Teletemp, Ltd. on 23rd Street. Ask for Puer Artemis and tell him Nero Lamanian sent you.

(Okay, so you like the book, Rodg ... but are you forcing every one of your customers to buy it?)

MORE THINGS LIKE DOCTOR WHO

Just wanted to thank you for publishing my LOC in issue #98. I didn't quite understand your explanations and references to some of the intervening issues, but in time I'm sure it'll make sense ...

"Time-Squink"—Ebonati slang for "Doxie-Glitch"? Are you sure? Perhaps there are subtle differences here to explore ... and this book had better run at least a hundred issues in order to resolve half the subplots raised thus far.

Two other time travel comics series that come to mind: American Comics Group's *Operation Peril* (1950-53) in its first dozen or so issues had a reasonably well researched series entitled "Time Travelers," which was really quite like *Rip Hunter*. And how could you forget the "Time Pool" backups in *The Atom* (Silver Age DC)?

AZTEC ACE is excellent work which I truly hope is not too avant garde to survive.

Bob Rapp
W140 N7528 Lilly Road
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051

Although I retain many fondly nostalgic memories of Ogden Whitney and the boys at ACG, Bob, I don't recall *Operation Peril* in particular—but we'll certainly take your word for it. (Did it star a fat guy licking a lollipop?)

I do recall the "Time Pool" series, however (as well as all the other Julie Schwartz-edited titles from that period)—if only now that you remind me. Perhaps the reason it did not at first come to mind is that it was an only occasional backup series in *The Atom*—which of course does not come to mind as a time travel series. But if memory serves, some of those "Time Pool" stories sure were nifty.

Okay, besides AZTEC ACE and the recently debuted *Time Spirits*, that makes three. Surely there've been more ...?

(As for needing a hundred issues to explain everything, you may be right; Cat chortlingly refers to the "half-life" of AZTEC ACE explanations ...)

ETYMOLOGY APOLOGY

Absolutely incredible. The writing is excellent and the art is superb. Some say AZTEC ACE is too complicated. Not in the least. It just requires a little more attention than your average comic. All in all, the concept and execution combine for one helluva good time, and I eagerly await your 500th anniversary issue.

But how did the term "Doxie-Glitch" originate? Did it take hours of research? Did it come in a sudden inspirational flash? Divine intervention? I am most curious. Really I am. Honest. You don't want to be responsible for my lying awake at nights pondering the word's origin, do you? Do you?

Mark C. Gentry
Route 2, Box 185
London, KY 40741

Well, Mark, since a glitch is a glitch by any other name—and since "Time-Glitch" plainly seemed both staid and prosaic—I first opted for "Paradox-Glitch" and then affectionately shortened it to "Doxie-Glitch" because I was in a goofy mood, made giddy by a doozy of a Muse. Sorry 'bout that ...

Incidentally, the Ebonati version of Doxie-Glitch—"Time-Squink"—derives from one of the nicknames I used when two-year-old son Derek was just a wee bairn: "Squinky-Dink" or sometimes simply "The Squink." (I also called him "Buster" and "Monkey-Man," but don't worry; in those appellations lurk no applications to Ace ...)

P.K. & ROBT. A.

I almost didn't buy AZTEC ACE the other day and I'd like you to know I'm very happy that I did! AZTEC ACE is the very finest sequential art I've ever seen! I'm pleased beyond all expectations and dying to know why Ben Franklin happened on Ace's home base, not to mention how he did it.

Aside from P.K. Dick and Robert Anton Wilson, you're the only author who's ever moved me enough to write.

This book really made a Sunday morning for me. Thanks.

J. Elliot Thacker
(no address given)

You're certainly welcome, J. Elliot, and it seems we share very similar tastes; Phil Dick and Robert Anton Wilson are two of my favorite writers too. In fact, Bob Wilson and I engaged in sporadic correspondence for several years in the late seventies and early eighties ... but I seem to have taken too long in replying to his last letter. Knowing he'd get a kick out of my Ebonati crew (their very name being the dark flipside of the Illuminati from his writings), I fired off a copy of AZTEC ACE #1 with my delinquent reply; it returned, alas, marked **MOVED; NO FORWARDING**. Maybe I should send off a package of issues 1-7 in care of his publisher ... Yeah, I think I will. Watch this space for results, Cosmic Conspiracy Buffs.

NEXT ISSUE: Proving that AZTEC ACE is your passport to past ports, we go to watch Jack the Ripper make his ascension to AztecGdhood as he becomes the "Lord of the Smoking Mirror." Till then ...

—Doug Moench

SPREAD THE WORD!



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10. Favorite Publication about Comics
11. Favorite Writer about Comics
12. Favorite Fan Artist
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